

REMARKS:

In view of the foregoing amendments, the following remarks and the accompanying request for continued examination, please reconsider the current amended claims.

All previous claims 1 through 25 have been cancelled. New claims 26 through 44 are attached herewith in which claims 26, 43 and 44 are independent. The total number of claims is less than twenty with only three claims being independent and accordingly no additional claim fees are required.

New claim 26 relates to previously cancelled claim 11 of the specification as filed which defines the unique method of lifting an object according to the present invention. In particular the method of the present invention is advantageous for lifting a flat bottomed object supported on particulate material. The now amended claims are now most distinguished by the method steps of lowering the hook member, rotating the hook member below the object and subsequently lifting the hook member to lift the object. This combination of lowering, rotating and lifting is advantageous for inserting the hook members between adjacent slabs in a sidewalk formed of pre-cast concrete slabs for example.

New claim 43 relates to a method claim including all of the limitations of claim 26 noted above along with the additional limitations of the shaft and hook being integrally formed of a single rod having a diameter less than half an inch and a circular cross section in which the hook is flat and perpendicular to the shaft so as to be best suited for insertion between adjacent slabs in a sidewalk as noted above for example.

New independent claim 44 also includes all of the limitations of claim 26 noted above along with the additional limitations of a plurality of lifting devices being used at spaced positions along opposing side edges of the object for lifting the object in the most stable configuration. All of the lifting devices are similarly rotated about respective longitudinal axes of the shafts for optimal insertion below the object.

The now amended claims are clearly distinguished from the Examiner's current cited references and accordingly it is believed that the claims are now in condition for allowance.

The Examiner's Interview Summary mailed on May 16, 2006, correctly summarizes the details of the telephone interview on March 29, 2006 between Esther O. Okezie and Ryan Dupuis. The Examiner was advised that cited reference 6,422,623 (Thomas) was not cited on the Notice of References Cited form which accompanied the Office Action dated March 10, 2006. A new Notice of References Cited form has since been mailed on May 16, 2006 in which the cited reference 6,422,623 (Thomas) has now been correctly listed.

Favorable reconsideration of this application is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted  
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